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PSC DIRECTS US WEST TO ESTIMATE COSTS & RATES
TO CHANGE YELLOWSTONE REGION LOCAL CALLING AREA

The state Public Service Commission has directed US West Communications to determine what it would cost to make changes to the Yellowstone Park region's local telephone calling area.

Last year the PSC approved US West's proposal for eight expanded local calling regions in Montana, including one for the Bozeman/Livingston area and a separate one for the Yellowstone Park area that included Gardiner and West Yellowstone. However, many Gardiner and West Yellowstone customers have contacted the PSC asking to be included in the Bozeman/Livingston local calling region rather than the Yellowstone region. Prompted by these requests, the PSC began a formal review in November to determine whether the Yellowstone calling region should be combined with the Bozeman/Livingston region, be returned to its previous local calling arrangement, or be kept as it is now.

Even though a calling usage study filed with the PSC in December by US West shows that exchanges within the Yellowstone region do not meet the PSC's minimum calling criteria to towns within the Bozeman/Livingston region, the PSC decided that sufficient "community of interest" exists between the Bozeman/Livingston and Yellowstone calling areas to warrant moving to the cost analysis phase of the formal review.

The PSC directed US West to determine what it would cost and what affected customers' telephone rates would be under each of these three options:

- preserving the existing Yellowstone expanded local calling region;
- returning the exchanges within the Yellowstone region to their previous calling arrangement;
- combining the Yellowstone region with the Bozeman/Livingston expanded local calling region.

US West must file its cost analysis and rate proposals within 90 days.

After the PSC receives the company's filing, further opportunity will be provided for public participation by affected customers. Interested persons may send their written comments to the PSC, PO Box 202601, Helena MT 59620-2601.

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